



# Meningococcal and Influenza Information for Parents

**TN State law 49-6-5005** states that schools shall provide parents/guardians with information about meningococcal disease and influenza and the effectiveness of vaccination against each. These vaccines are NOT required to attend Frayser Community Schools (Humes Middle, Westside Middle, and Martin Luther King Jr. College Preparatory High School).

## **MENINGITIS**

There are 5 types of meningitis. See below for much more information about this condition:

- **Meningitis**

For more information about meningitis from the TN Department of Health, please go to the following link: **[TN DOH meningitis web page](#)**

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND VACCINATION**

What is meningococcal meningitis? Meningococcal disease, which includes meningococcal meningitis, is a serious bacterial infection that strikes between 800 and 1200 Americans each year. Although rare, meningococcal disease can cause meningitis, swelling of the tissues around the brain or spinal cord; bacteremia, a severe blood infection; or pneumonia. Vaccination has been available for years and is a safe and effective way to help protect against this potentially devastating disease.

Who is at risk for getting meningococcal meningitis? Although the disease occurs in all age groups, infants, adolescents and young adults, and people 65 years of age and older are at increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease.



How do you get meningococcal meningitis? The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are spread through respiratory droplets and direct contact with respiratory secretions. Common everyday activities can facilitate this spread, including kissing; sharing utensils and water bottles; and being in close quarters, such as living in a dormitory. Fatigue may also put people at greater risk of meningococcal disease, possibly by weakening the immune system.

What are symptoms of meningococcal meningitis? Meningococcal meningitis can be hard to recognize, especially in its early stages, because symptoms are similar to those of more common viral illnesses. But unlike more common illnesses, the disease can progress quickly and may cause death in as little as 1 day. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, vomiting, exhaustion, and/or a rash. What can happen if you get meningococcal meningitis? Although rare, meningococcal meningitis is serious and can potentially cause the death of an otherwise healthy young person within as little as 1 day after symptoms first appear. About 10% to 15% of the 800-1200 Americans who get meningococcal disease will die. Nearly 1 in 5 survivors are left with serious medical problems, including: amputation of arms, legs, fingers, or toes; neurological problems; deafness and kidney damage.

How can you help prevent your child from developing meningococcal meningitis? Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have shown that, following infancy, there is a second peak in meningococcal disease incidence among adolescents and young adults between 16 and 21 years of age. Even though the disease is rare, it can result in severe, permanent disabilities and death, so it is important to take every precaution to help protect against it. To help protect against meningococcal disease, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends routine vaccination of adolescents 11 through 18 years of age (a single dose of vaccine should be administered at 11 or 12 years of age, with a booster dose at 16 years of age for children who receive the first dose before 16 years of age). Getting the booster, which is recommended by the CDC but not required in many states, is a critical step when it comes to following the recommended vaccination schedule. The booster helps provide protection through adolescence into young adulthood, which is a time when the risk of meningococcal disease tends to increase.



For more information:

Talk to your child's school nurse or health care provider about meningococcal meningitis and its prevention.

Visit [www.Facebook.com/VoicesofMeningitis](https://www.Facebook.com/VoicesofMeningitis).

Call the Shelby County Health Department (Memphis: 901-222-9000)

Visit the CDC web site <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>

## INFLUENZA

See the CDC page on [Influenza - Key Facts](#)

What is Influenza (flu)?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Flu Symptoms - Influenza (flu) can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu is different from a cold. Flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.



How Flu Spreads - Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.

Period of Contagiousness - You may be able to spread flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

- People with flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after their illness begins.
- Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.
- Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

Onset of Symptoms - The time from when a person is exposed and infected with flu to when symptoms begin is about 2 days, but can range from about 1 to 4 days.

Complications of Flu - Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

People at High Risk from Flu - Anyone can get flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years.

Preventing Seasonal Flu - The first and most important step in preventing flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions (like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing) to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.



Diagnosing Flu - It is very difficult to distinguish flu from other viral or bacterial respiratory illnesses based on symptoms alone. There are tests available to diagnose flu. More information is available: [Diagnosing Flu](#).

Treating Flu - There are [influenza antiviral drugs](#) that can be used to treat flu illness.

More information is available: "[Seasonal Influenza, More Information](#)."